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Israel Reported Set to Bargain On Jordan Force

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Israel tentatively is prepared to drop its opposition to the Reagan administration's plans for a Jordanian rapid deployment force if the United States agrees to measures involving closer military and strategic cooperation with the Jewish state, U.S. and diplomatic sources said yesterday.

The Israeli requests are expected to be made to Undersecretary of State Lawrence S. Eagleburger in a series of meetings beginning today in Jerusalem.

The Israelis are expected to tell Eagleburger that they are willing to reconsider their opposition to the Jordanian force in exchange for guarantees that it will not be used against Israel and agreements to renew U.S. support for development of Israel's Lavi fighter plane and to pre-position equipment for American military forces in Israel.

According to the sources, the Israelis want the administration to change its present arms-length position toward highly visible strategic cooperation and make a new start on joint ventures contemplated in the U.S.-Israeli memorandum of understanding that the United States dropped two years ago after Israel annexed the Golan Heights.

The anticipated Israeli move comes during administration debate about Middle East policy that reportedly has Secretary of State George P. Shultz advocating higher-profile cooperation with Israel and Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger opposing the idea as potentially injurious to U.S. ties with Arab governments.

According to the sources, the debate was given renewed urgency at an Oct. 18 meeting of the National Security Council, where Shultz proposed easing the chilly military relationship in effect since Israel invaded Lebanon last year.

Shultz reportedly argued that closer cooperation could be valuable in countering Syria's efforts to stir up trouble in Lebanon and in inducing greater Israeli flexibility on wider Mideast issues such as negotiations on the West Bank and U.S. plans to equip and train a Jordanian force to help friendly Arab states counter attacks or internal insurgency.

His plan is known to have been opposed by Weinberger, who was backed by the joint chiefs and CIA Director William J.

Casey. They reportedly argued that new cooperation or increased aid to Israel would cause problems with the Arabs and inhibit efforts to obtain greater Arab cooperation in resolving the situation in Lebanon.

The still unresolved debate is understood to have taken on almost emotionally symbolic overtones for Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's government after the Oct. 23 bomb attack against U.S. Marines in Beirut. The United States rejected an Israeli offer to provide construction equipment to help dig injured Marines from the rubble of their headquarters and to care for them at Israeli medical facilities.

The sources said that Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Arens was so offended by the spurning of his offer to help that he convinced his government to use Eagleburger's visit as a vehicle for trying to force the issue of U.S. intentions about strategic cooperation.

The sources said the Israelis intend to confront Eagleburger with a variation on Shultz's idea that such cooperation can lead to mutually beneficial trade-offs. Their principal bargaining chip involves U.S. hopes for the Jordanian force, a secrecy-cloaked project that became the subject of great controversy last month following disclosure that Congress had authorized \$220 million for it in a secret section of the 1984 defense authorization bill.

Last Friday, the Senate approved a resolution by Sen. Daniel Patrick

Moynihan (D-N.Y.) that would bar spending on the plan unless it is openly approved by Congress. The White House has scheduled a meeting of congressional leaders today, reportedly to discuss ways of getting around the Moynihan amendment, but congressional sources said Congress is unlikely to go ahead with the project if Israel opposes it strongly.

Until now, however, the Israelis have confined their criticism to relatively muted comments by anonymous officials. What they do next, the sources said, will depend to a large extent on the explanations they get from Eagleburger and the quid pro quos the United States offers on strategic cooperation.

Arens, an aeronautical engineer who helped design the Lavi, is known to be particularly eager for a lifting of all restrictions on U.S. help in its development. The Pentagon has been reluctant to do that on grounds that it means giving Israel access to secret U.S. technology. American aircraft manufacturers have been unenthusiastic about Israel having a fighter it can sell to other countries in competition with U.S. models.

Last August, the administration did lift a number of restrictions, including a freeze on the export of three U.S.-made technical systems required for the Lavi. But it still will not allow Israel to use U.S. foreign military sales credits to finance research and development on the plane. The Israelis reportedly want that barrier removed.